



The Hoopoe is often mistaken for a woodpecker

Habit:

Terrestrial and arboreal.

Habitat:

Near villages, farmland, open habitats, open areas, deciduous and sparse forests.

Distribution:

Entire India up to 2000 m altitude. Also in Europe, Central Asia and North Africa.

Behaviour:

Seen in singles or pairs. A confiding bird. Winter migrants may be seen in small flocks of 20-30 birds. The crest is erected in a fan shape from time to time. Call in soft, melancholy resonant notes. Take dust baths.

Residential Status:

Common Resident and also migrant

Conservation Status:

Not threatened.



Terrestrial feeder



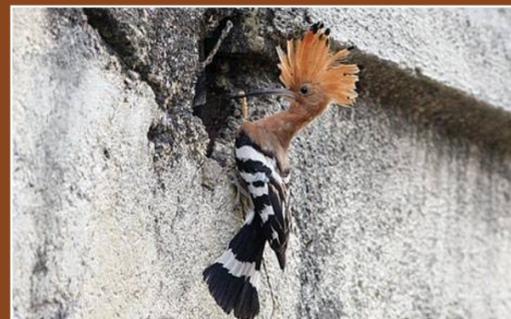
Zebra-like wing markings

Food:



Prey is taken from the ground with the help of the long and pointed probing bill and is delicately handled

Grub, egg-cases, cocoons, pupae, larvae, earth worms, caterpillars, butterflies, crickets, locusts, grasshoppers, earwigs, termites, spiders, cockroaches, centipedes, small frogs and lizards, geckos and rarely berries. Soil in cropland, lawns, dry river-beds are probed with the long bill and food is procured in the forceps-like bill. Male feeds the incubating female in the nest.



The Hoopoe can cling to vertical surfaces and can walk on the ground as well



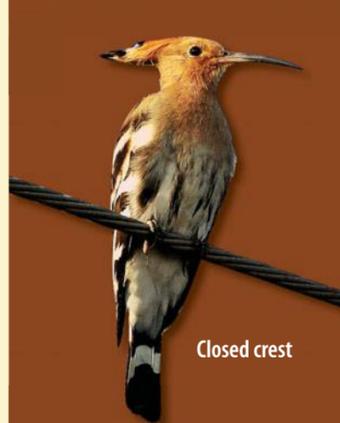
Inner wing pattern



Outer wing pattern



Tail pattern



Closed crest



Open crest



Long pointed beak



Key Features:

- Sexes similar.
- Bill long, slender, curved.
- Pale gape.
- Iris brown.
- Grey brown feet.
- 3rd and 4th toes partially fused at the base.
- Wings rounded with zebra markings.
- Ten primaries and ten rectrices with one white band.
- Secondaries with 5 white bands.

Flight:



Various flight poses of the Hoopoe demonstrate the control on its wings and agility

Courtship:



Pairing, mutual feeding and bill clapping are seen during courtship

Nest:



Tree nest in a natural hollow Nest in a wall hole

Deep cavity with narrow entrance and spacious inner chamber where chicks and parent can snuggle.

Nest site:

Hoopoe does not excavate a hole in a tree and uses existing holes or deep crevices in tree trunks; also hole or cavity in wall of house, bund, dam or well; cavity in ruins, under rafters or thatched roofs. 0.5 to 5 m from ground. Lined with leaves, grass, straw, hair, rags, plastic, paper, foils, feathers, etc.

Young:

Nidifugous with wide, white gape and short bills that elongate later. Chicks are fed by both parents. Juveniles peep from the nest hole few days prior to fledging.

Threats:



A dead, dry chick in the nest. Dead chicks are not removed by parents

Nestlings are sometimes taken from the nest-hole for keeping as pets. Natural predation of chicks by snakes is recorded by us.

Etymology:

L. *Upupa*, the Hoopoe; Gr. *Epops*, the Hoopoe. Onomatopoeic name after call *hoo-po, hoo-po, hoo-po*. The Marathi name is *Hudhud*.

Protection: Included in Schedule IV of India Wildlife (Protection) Act.

Cultural Aspects:



The Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) and the hoopoe, Solomon's messenger, a drawing Safavid dynasty, about AD 1590-1600, From Qazvin, Iran: Catalogue No. ME OA 1948-12-11,8, AN30134001: © Trustees of the British Museum

The Hoopoe is mentioned in the epic Valmiki Ramayana as *Putrapriya* - one fond of his sons. The exiled Rama having heard the Hoopoe's melancholy call, remembered his grieving mother. The crest is supposedly bestowed to the Hoopoe by King Solomon. It features on postal stamps. Red-headed Falcons were flown at the hoopoe by falconers.



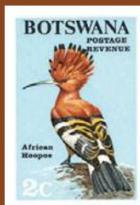
Various Hoopoe insignias



Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Linnaeus, 1758.

Type Locality – *Europae sylvis* = Sweden

Local names: *Hudhud* (Marathi); *Khatola*, *Navah* (Hindi); *Khatkato* (Sind); *Sukdudu* (Himachal Pradesh); *Satut* (Kashmiri); *Murgh-i-Suleman* (Baluchi).



- **Length:** 310 mm.
- **Wing:** 140-153 mm (M); 136-148 mm (F)
- **Weight:** 60-73 g (M & F)
- **Breeding Season:** March to June.
- **Clutch:** 3-7 eggs per year
- **Eggs:** 25-26.2 mm x 17-17.6 mm. Pale whitish-blue



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Hoopoe

- **Order:** Coraciiformes • **Family:** Upupidae
- **Status:** Common. Least Concern

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Amazing Facts



Inside of the Hoopoe's nest is filthy and a dead chick may remain with live chicks. The Hoopoe often feeds the young, on the wing

This insect eater is beneficial to agriculture. Chicks have a white gape that could be a useful guide for parents while feeding them in dark nests. Nest is foul smelling and the chicks squirt liquid excreta and emit hissing sounds

when threatened. Fan the crest intermittently. Hoopoe is often mistaken for a woodpecker. There is only one species in this family worldwide; the genus is monotypic.

Phenology



A clutch of five eggs



Incubating female



Chicks have a white gape and fluffy down



White gape is visible in the dark nest



Chick is turning its back to the nest opening for defecation



Chicks just prior to fledging



A chick peeping out of the nest hole

Satish Pande, Rajkumar Pawar, Prashant Deshpande, Dr. M. N. Mahajan and Amit Pawashe did field research for over 8 years.